



St Mary the Blessed Virgin Addington

A Walk around the Churchyard





Introduction

Consecrated ground around the church has been used as a burial place for centuries. The tradition of marking a grave with a memorial inscription of stone is a more recent phenomenon although the landed gentry often placed memorials inside churches, such as the monument to the Leigh Family (16th century) by the altar and the 'Addington Pickle Jar' in memory of Barlow Trecothick who built Addington Place and died in 1775.

A survey of the graves was carried out around 1911, we believe by William Mills, a local historian who lived at Broadcombe, a hamlet on Coombe Road, and sang in the choir. His survey was hand drawn on paper-backed parchment and includes a few personal details of the occupations or hobbies of parishioners buried here. These documents are now deposited at Surrey Record Office, our diocesan record office at Woking, but digital copies can be referred to when trying to locate a grave. The East Surrey Family History Society surveyed the churchyard in 1994. They documented 1053 graves, recording the type of monument as well as the inscription. This is a valuable document, as over thirty years later, many of these inscriptions are now barely legible. It has now been updated as a record of all the grave memorials in the churchyard. A copy can be found in a blue folder inside the church. In addition to these documents, the burial registers hold details of all burials and interments of ashes, and provide information in some cases about the burial plots. All registers prior to 1996 are held at Woking but we have transcribed copies of all burials back to 1559.

The churchyard has been extended several times to accommodate further graves. On 7th November 1849, a new portion of the churchyard (the western section between the church hall and the Archbishops' memorial) was consecrated being glebe land of the Parish of Addington, given up for the purpose by the Revd. Matthew Farrer – there is a plaque to commemorate this generosity on the wall of the vestry. A further burial ground was consecrated by the Bishop of Croydon (Archdeacon E. S. Woods) in July 1931 – this appears to be the eastern extension on the site of cottages on Addington Village Road, which had been demolished around 1897 (next to Flint Cottage).

The churchyard was deemed full in 1977 and closed to new plots. Burial is only permitted of relatives in existing graves if there is space, or of ashes. The churchyard is therefore now maintained by Croydon Borough Council.



An initial walk around a few notable graves

As you emerge from the church, bear left on the path. The isolated headstone in the middle of the plot ahead of you is the oldest memorial that has been identified in the churchyard. Amazingly, after more than 325 years the inscription can still be made out, but only sometimes! Quite deeply etched, it becomes magically visible in direct sunlight, for not much more than an hour either side of midday on sunny days! It reads: 'Here lyeth the body of THOMAS MEGER who departed this life 27th of January Anno Domini 1699 aged 45 years' and on the corresponding footstone 'T.M.1699'. Above the inscription you can make out the outline of a skull and crossbones!



Next to him on either side of the footpath are the rather imposing family vaults of two branches of the Covell family, who had been prominent in Addington and Croydon since at least the sixteenth century. To the left, the altar tomb of Francis and Elizabeth, containing their remains and those of their four children, two of whom died as infants. Francis was for 31 years Minister of Providence Baptist Chapel, Croydon—that is recorded on the recently restored inscription on top of the tomb. The smaller coped stone opposite contains three generations of a different branch of the family, the descendants of George and Mary Covell, whose grandson 'Thomas the younger' was killed along with his wife by a bomb on 9th August 1944—two of several civilian casualties from World War II in the churchyard.

Tucked behind the Francis Covell altar tomb you will see the cremation stone of Raymond Riesco, a distinguished philatelist and collector of Chinese ceramics, after whom a gallery at the Museum of Croydon is named.

Between his stone and the porch, and rather cramped since the porch itself was extended by Archbishop Howley in 1843, are two handsome gravestones to members of the Howard family. You will have to lean or even climb into the gap to admire both the elaborate script and the flowery language of these inscriptions: 'his benevolence of heart extended to all, to his family in particular it was unbounded ...'



Further along the path, the prominent altar tomb on the right is that of William Foster who founded and endowed a charitable school in East Wickham (Bexley) where he had been born. A butler in Addington, and unable to read or write, he left money and land in his will 'to enable 20 young people in the then Parish of East Wickham, to be educated in "Reading, Writing and Arithmetik"'. He died in 1727; as the plate says, his school was still called 'Foster's Endowed School' in 1976, although its site had moved twice since the original foundation, and it is now simply called 'Foster's School, Welling'.

As you walk on round the church, note the great variety of shapes, sizes and styles of memorials. The simplest, like those of members of the Holland family where the path forks, consist of an inscribed headstone, and sometimes a footstone to mark the edges of the grave. Can you identify near here on the right one of the few remaining wooden headboards in the churchyard? – it is hard to distinguish by sight alone!

More impressive are some other raised family memorials along the end of the church, where several generations of the same family could be buried together. Many of these were created during Victorian times. They could also be used as memorials to family members who are not actually buried here: that of John Montague Newnham, D.L., LL.D., J.P., who lived in Bishop's Walk and died in 1945, contains a memorial to his son, John Ralph Fraser Newnham, Lieutenant Commander, Royal Navy, 'killed in action H.M.S. Glorious 8th June 1940'.



As you turn the path corner by the vestry door, look out for an upright headstone on your right with ivy on its back. It marks the grave of surely the most exotically named person here, Mahalatha Elizabeth! (If there's a rival for that distinction it might go to Mynardus Jeremias Devenish, buried in the north-west corner of the churchyard.) She was the granddaughter of Thomas and Esther Dulake who kept the Shirley Inn for many years in the mid-nineteenth century. It is a sad story: Mahalatha married Walter Jones in Croydon in 1873 aged 17, had a child a year later and died in August 1874 aged 18, as can be made out on her tombstone.

This section of the graveyard contains the family tombs of several former vicars of St Mary's. A little way from the path, beyond Mahalatha and adjacent to the fenced-off plot of Archbishop Sumner's family, is the grave of Gilbert Maxwell Scott (1863-1942), vicar of Addington from 1916 to 1925. This is one of several monuments where an impressive cross has fallen off and lies broken. Even after he retired as vicar, Gilbert remained active in South Croydon in local council affairs, particularly involving education, and the Gilbert Scott School was named after him. His wife Esther, his mother-in-law Mary Walker and the ashes of his son Walter, are all buried with him in this family grave.

Back close to the path about half-way along the church is a rather impressive grave resembling a grand bed: this was for the wife of the Revd Matthew Farrer, Frances Emma, who died aged 32, and pregnant, not long after they had arrived in Addington. Matthew, our vicar between 1843 and 1867, married again, and is himself buried at St John's Shirley where he was also vicar.

Next to Frances's grave is the coffin-shaped family grave of Matthew's successor as vicar of St Mary's, William Benham (1831-1910), vicar from 1867 to 1873. His first wife, Louisa, died during that period and is



buried here along with two of their daughters, Rosamond and Edith. A third daughter, Marian, who died in India in 1904, is commemorated on the tomb but is not buried here. William himself died in 1910 whilst Rector of St Edmund's, Lombard Street, and his second wife Caroline was buried in this same grave in 1924.

Moving along to the corner of the church, you will see that this section of the churchyard is dominated by gravestones in the form of the cross. After the Boer War, memorials generally became less grandiose and crosses were more

common. Along the west end of the church is a series of 'Bed Head Stones' on the graves of members of the Alwen family who milled corn at Shirley Windmill.

Also visible from this corner are several of our distinctive Commonwealth War Grave Commission headstones – simple white stones with a military crest, rank and service number, and name. Many of the casualties buried here were not local men, but victims of war who were injured and taken to Addington Palace which served as a hospital.



As you walk along the end of the church, note a rather touching group of monuments to infants and babies to the right of the path. There are of course a distressing number of infant burials recorded here; many, particularly in the nineteenth century, were buried without any memorial.

Finally, as you reach the corner of the church, noticing the very venerable yew tree by the wall, you are looking at the oldest part of the graveyard, with representatives of many other long-established Addington families, particularly the Heaths and the Gowards. In the midst of the plot, completely smothered in ivy, is what is probably the oldest surviving stone in the churchyard: the hand-drawn plan from 1911 associates it by tradition with one John, the son of John Morgayne (Morgan) who was buried here in December 1593.

Archbishops of Canterbury buried at Addington

Now that you have found your bearings, this second short walk will take you a little further from the paths. Remember that the end of the church facing the Church Hall is the west end!

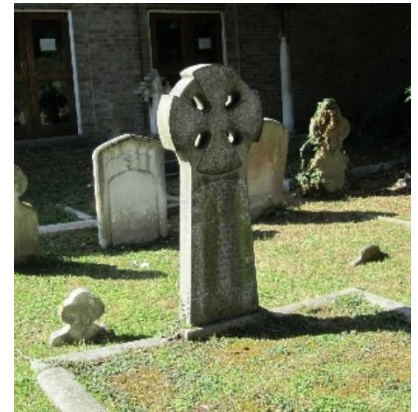
The Church of England acquired Addington Place (and renamed it Addington Palace) as a summer residence for the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1808, and five Archbishops are buried at Addington. The prominent structure to the south-west of the church is a memorial to them all.



Charles Manners Sutton (1755-1828, archbishop from 1805 to 1828) was laid to rest in a vault under the church and there is an additional memorial to him in the church – a white marble tablet on the north wall near the organ. On the other side of the church, there is also a memorial tablet to his son Charles (1780-1845) who became Speaker of the House of Commons.

William Howley (1766-1848, archbishop from 1828 to 1848) was also buried in a vault under the church and has a two-part memorial, high on the chancel wall facing the altar, as well as a tomb-like memorial at ground level.

John Bird Sumner (1780-1862, archbishop from 1848 to 1862) was buried with several members of his family in an area of the churchyard surrounded by low railings, to the north-east of the church. The archbishop is beneath the narrow coped stone within this plot – the most modest grave in it – along with his daughter Maria Thomas. In adjacent tombs are his daughter Georgina Wilson; his daughter-in-law, Antoinetta Maria Sumner (née Edwards), along with her baby son Wilson Charles, who died in 1853 aged 7 months; and the archbishop's son Robert George Moncrieff Sumner; Georgina's daughter Mary Wilson and son Robert Dobie Wilson; and Maria's husband John Thomas. (The archbishop's wife Marianne had died before he came to Addington.)



He was succeeded by Charles Thomas Longley (1794-1868, archbishop from 1862 to 1868), whose family grave is to the West of the Church near the corner of the hall – a large rectangular kerb which was surmounted by a cross that has now broken and fallen. Here or nearby are buried the archbishop, his daughters Caroline and Frances, his son Henry (who had become Sir Henry Longley K.C.B.), also Henry's widow Diana Eliza (née Davenport), and their baby daughter Rosamond. (The archbishop's wife Caroline had died before he came to Addington. Elderly archbishops must have had quite lonely lives!)

Archibald Campbell Tait (1811-1882) was archbishop from 1868 to 1882. His family grave is to the west of the church about half-way back on the third row from the hall – again a prominent square kerb surmounted by a large Celtic cross on a pillar, intact and elaborately inscribed; here are buried the archbishop, his wife Catharine (née Spooner), their daughter Agnes Sitwell Ellison, their son Craufurd, and their daughter Lucy. Catharine and Archibald had earlier suffered the death of five children to scarlet fever – pre-antibiotics – in a matter of weeks in 1856. The text on the reverse of the cross indicates that 'A.C.T.' (the archbishop) was born on St Thomas's Day (21st December) 1811, became Bishop of London in 1856 and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1868, and died on Advent Sunday (3rd December) 1882. On the sides of the cross the odd sequences of letters indicate that 'C.T.H.T.' (Catharine) *also* died, remarkably enough, on Advent Sunday (1st December 1878) and that 'C.R.T.' (Craufurd Tait) died on the eve ('vigil') of Ascension Day (29th May 1878).



The last Archbishop of Canterbury to be connected with Addington was Edward White Benson (1829-1896, archbishop from 1883 to 1896). He was buried in Canterbury, but his daughter Mary (1863-1890) was buried here during his tenure and was later joined by her sister Margaret (1865-1916) and finally by their mother Mary, the archbishop's widow (1841-1918). Their grave is marked by a crucifix on a tall pillar near the hall and visible from the Tait grave.



It was Edward Benson's successor, Archbishop Frederick Temple, who sold Addington Palace to the South African diamond trader Frederick English, who is also buried in the churchyard – a very imposing and elaborate cross near the north-west corner of the churchyard by the wall. In his honour there is also an elaborate memorial on the south wall of the church adjacent to the door. His widow, Elizabeth, buried in the same grave in 1932, made a bequest to the church, specifically for the upkeep of the churchyard, which is acknowledged on a wooden tablet in the baptistery.

There are altogether at least 28 war-related graves or memorials in the churchyard: nine from World War I, and nineteen from World War II, including six civilian casualties and one member of the Home Guard. You may have seen the window in honour of the Home Guard next to the organ inside the church. In fact, many memorials and windows inside the church can be linked, directly or indirectly, to tombs in the churchyard.





Amongst the headstones, kerbed graves and crosses, there are many smaller flat cremation stones in the churchyard, particularly in the newest area of the churchyard to the North East, and along the northern side of the church on both sides of the path. The first mention of cremated ashes in our burial register dates from 1924, and for about twenty years after that, ashes were occasionally interred within pre-existing family graves. 1949 is the first date at which a grave was designed to receive only ashes. Since 1977, when the churchyard was declared full, only the interment of ashes or burial in a pre-existing family grave has been possible.

As you have seen, not all the grave stones are legible, and there are many graves that have no marker at all, either on cost grounds or through absence of surviving family. It is not uncommon for us to receive requests to find the graves of long-lost relatives, and with the help of the hand-drawn plans and registers we can often, but not always, do so. Work is in hand to collate these electronically to make it easier to establish (or at least hazard a more informed guess) where any particular grave is, and to update and correct the record of all the memorials; this project may be completed and uploaded to our website <https://addington.org.uk/> - so do come back again to see whether there is more information on this enchanting and fascinating place!



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Pictures by Edward Forman.